

January 1, 2009

Could You Be One of the Five?

*"They overcame [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death"*
(Revelation 12:11).

During 2008 we recommended some movies and books that we had found helpful and strengthening in our own faith journey. **The End Of The Spear** was an especially stirring film, a vivid portrayal of five men who were martyred in Ecuador in the mid-1950s. For the sake of reaching with the Gospel the most fearsome tribe in the region, these men were willing to risk their lives as His witnesses. From our Father's perspective, a martyr is "a witness to the truth." A martyr's devotion to his or her King Jesus to willingly serve His Kingdom purposes is His privileged call for each of us who claim to belong to Him. You may have spent too much time in religious complacency in pews and Sunday School classes that perpetuate always learning but rarely (or never) responding with action or change. If so, our Lord's Kingdom call, 'don't love your life so much as to shrink from death', may seem either too costly, or something He'd never ask of you. But keep this in mind. Because of His immeasurable love for you, our Lord Jesus is well aware of what it cost Him to fulfill our Father's will on your behalf. And He who was the willing Sacrifice for us has joyfully given His indwelling Spirit to those who have run to Him in repentance with a trust that's committed to His Lordship (Acts 2:36-38). It is because of His Spirit in us that our Lord and King commands His subjects as beloved bondservants to willingly fulfill His bidding.

We're speaking to you as a person who has a heart to fulfill your part in His Kingdom, rather than as someone who is content to fulfill a weekly duty. In Luke 14:26-35 Jesus speaks with the authority of One Who can call those with "ears to hear" to recognize the cost of belonging to Him. He presents the cost as willingness to forsake family, personal goals and any earthly things that would hinder clinging to Him: **"Whoever does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple"** (14:33). What do you think "ALL that he has" means? Think in terms of not only a willingness to sacrifice your life as did the men in Ecuador. Consider as well your daily worldly pursuits that give you satisfaction but have nothing to do with serving our King. His Spirit is well able to pinpoint any facets of personal idolatry that you've rationalized as "there's nothing wrong with this!" Do you have "ears to hear" Him?

A warning about misplaced confidence:

For the past 6 years we've lived in a 300-unit senior mobile home park. The average age of the residents is about 75. We've grieved that the message of the Hebraic Restoration has born no fruit here, and at times we've been very discouraged by this. However, as the multifaceted events of 2008 have unfolded, we can more readily understand why our Lord has had us living here — to witness the evil fruit of misplaced confidence.

Many of our park's residents attend a Thursday morning "Bible study" in which, as a number of the attendees have admitted, the "milk issues" of God's Word are repeated again and again to the contented listeners. Most acknowledge that their religious participation has been confined to activities either under a steeple or directed by others who don't call for any response of changed life. In 2008 our Lord attacked the idols in which so many of these retirees placed their confidence — the **gods of greed, religion,** and **misplaced trust in government**. As they've painfully realized, their "fixed income" of provision through investments, pensions and Social Security wasn't as "fixed" as they thought. Many are plagued by worry and heaviness.

You who are younger need to learn a lesson from this older generation:

• **This is the generation that failed to fight for the Bible and prayer to remain in public schools — now they are being judged.**

Studies have shown that the increase in crime and immorality in this nation began to escalate dramatically when Bible reading and prayer disappeared from public education. The National Education Association filled the spiritual void with Humanism, disguised as a philosophy in which mankind is dependent only on Self and human potential. The mantra of this man-exalting "religion" is that there is no God and no moral absolutes. Only the fulfillment, satisfaction and achievement of Self matters.

• **This is the generation that put their hope in Social Security and their own retirement accounts — now they are being judged.** When Social Security began, there were 17 workers for every retiree. Now only 2.5 workers provide the funds for each retiree. Abortion has destroyed 50 million potential workers. The generation that allowed 50 million souls made in the image of God to be murdered in their mother's womb are now being judged. If you're a younger worker, do you realize that you'll NEVER get anything from the government when you retire, no matter how much you have to put in?

Now is the time to renounce the gods of greed and misplaced trust in government. These give you false hope that you can enjoy an "earthly heaven" of pleasurable retirement years — although in your heart you already know that won't happen. No matter what the government does about the Stock Market, our Lord will not let this bastion of idolatry go unchallenged. God has no problem with wise investments. Rather, He is challenging the **god of greed** in which spiritually adulterous people put false confidence.

Just as He warned and brought up short the Israelites when they pursued other gods, our Father is confronting His children today. Don't go on thinking you can keep pursuing your friendship with the world's goals and desires and still enjoy fellowship with Him: "Do not love the world or the things in the world.

***"If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh,
the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—
is not of the Father but is of the world.***

***And the world is passing away, and the lust of it;
but he who does the will of God abides forever."***

(1 John 2:15-17).

Can you picture our Father's sorrow if He sees that you have no love for Him in your heart because your passion lies with what the world offers? Seriously, can you picture how He feels? If His Spirit is in you, He has empowered you to do His will so that you can abide with Him forever. But you need to make a choice, one with eternal consequences. Please, use this series of Lifebytes to review areas in which you may be holding on to the sin of misplaced confidence and goals.

We want to encourage you to use this coming year to stay clean in Jesus! Rid your marriage through repentance of any and all pursuits and goals that make you an enemy of God (James 4:4). Fill in those unrighteous ruts with a way of life that evidences you love the King of kings and belong to Him. How do you know that what's happening now is not the beginning of the birth pangs of the Great Tribulation? Many of the signs of the end which our Lord Jesus forewarned in Matthew 24 are happening all over the world. Ask yourself, are you ready? Will He see in you a love-grounded obedient trust in Lord Jesus that reveals your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life?

NOW is the time for you and your spouse to live righteously in full fellowship with our Father and Lord Jesus through His indwelling Spirit. The Book of Revelation leaves no doubt about the unrepentant who choose live in sin. When the days of judgment come, they curse the Name of God; they refuse to humble themselves and repent (Revelation 16:9,11,21). Are you resolved and prepared as a couple to live as salt and light among those who thus far are living in darkness?

Resolve with us to grow as vessels of Christ's likeness available for His use.

Mike & Sue